The Partnership between Early Language Development and Social Skills

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Learning Objectives:

- Identify early communication and social-emotional developmental milestones
- Explain the difference between structural language and pragmatics
- Understand the connection between social skills and language and how to facilitate one when the other is lacking
6 Education Theorists That All Teachers Should Know

Lev Vygotsky
- *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* – The range of skills that are a little bit more difficult than what a student can do independently.
- *Scaffolding* – Changing the level of support to meet the ability of the child

Jean Piaget
- *Schema* – The things a child already knows. Students connect new knowledge to an existing schema
- *Constructivism* – Students learn by doing, rather than by being told

B. F. Skinner
- *Behaviorism* – Positive reinforcement (praise, rewards, etc.) strengthens behavior or increases the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated. Negative reinforcement (punishment) pushes a child away from a behavior.

Jerome Bruner
- *Spiral Curriculum* – Children can tackle challenging topics in age-appropriate ways. These topics can be revisited and expanded upon year after year

Benjamin Bloom
- *Bloom’s Taxonomy* – A hierarchy of learning objectives starting with knowledge and growing in complexity to evaluation

Howard Gardner
- *Multiple Intelligences* – Humans have several ways of processing information (musical, visual, verbal, logical, etc.)
Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory
Lev Vygotsky

• Soviet developmental psychologist
• Born November 1896 - Died June 1934 (aged 37)
• Two periods and transitional phase
  • Instrumental Period (1920s) - Internalization
  • Crisis, Criticism, Self-Criticism (1929-1932) - separation of higher and lower psychological functions, overemphasis on language
  • Holistic Period (1932-1934) - need for social interaction

Higher cognitive functions in children emerge through practical activity in a social environment.
Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory

It must not be forgotten that the basic law of children’s creativity is that its value lies not in its results, not in the product of creation, but in the process itself. It is not important what children create, but that they do create, that they exercise and implement their creative imagination.

- Vygotsky

4 Principles to Vygotskian Framework
Learning Objective #1

Identify early communication and social-emotional developmental milestones
Developmental Milestones: 0-3 Months

Communication
- Receptive:
  - Responds to person’s face/looks attentively at person’s face (by 3 months)
- Expressive:
  - Cries to express hunger and anger
  - Brings hands to mouth
  - Coos, gurgles, laughs, and smiles
  - Expresses basic emotions and needs

Social/Emotional
- Smiles/responds to mother/caregiver
- Has brief eye contact but by 3 months regularly looks directly at speaker’s face, localizes speaker with eyes

Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee
Language plays a central role in Cognitive Development

Daddy loves you...
Developmental Milestones: 4-6 Months

**Communication**
- Expressive
  - Blows raspberries, coos, yells
  - Uses non-verbal means to call attention to physical needs, toileting, hunger
  - Uses non-verbal means to express personal reactions, curiosity, surprise, reluctance
- Receptive
  - Discriminates between angry and friendly tones/facial expressions, cries in response to an angry voice/expression

**Social/Emotional**
- Engages in communicative play, peek-a-boo
- Begins to enjoy finger-plays/finger-games
- Imitates facial expressions
- Shares joint attention

*Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee*
Developmental Milestones: 7-9 Months

**Communication**
- **Expressive**
  - Repeats CV syllables in babble
  - Vocalizes or gestures to request/protest
  - Smiles, makes eye contact, laughs
  - Uses language to note the disappearance of objects, all gone
  - Refers to objects by holding, pointing, looking at
- **Receptive**
  - Looks attentively at a person’s face
  - Begins to show attention to storytelling/storysigning*
  - Responds with gestures to such words as up, high, bye bye

**Social/Emotional**
- Begins to understand two-way intentional communication
- Enjoys finger games, finger plays
- Imitates the movements of others
- Shows a desire to interact with people
- Anticipates activities
- Nods, waves, and claps
- Asks, protests, comments by reaching/pointing
- Begins book sharing with adult

*Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee
Developmental Milestones: 10-12 Months

**Communication**
- Expressive
  - Begins to use first words, bye bye, mama
  - Begins to label objects (without cueing)
  - Begins to greet others
- Receptive
  - Occasionally gives toys/objects on request
  - Occasionally follows simple commands
  - Begins to show interaction and understand greetings

**Social/Emotional**
- Continues to develop turn-taking skills
- Responds to activities, laughter by repeating action
- Indicates desire to change activities
- Begins directing others by tugging, pushing
- Enjoys games and initiates them
- Enjoys storytelling/storysigning

Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee
Developmental Milestones: 13-15 Months

**Communication**
- Expressive
  - Continues to use jargon/babbling with more true words developing
  - Imitates/approximates new words
  - Uses a single word + a gesture
- Receptive
  - Points to self and objects in environment
  - Follows one-step directions
  - Begins to answer where, what questions

**Social/Emotional**
- Imitates actions of others
- Takes turns as language develops
- Involves others by showing things during play

*Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee*
Language plays a central role in Cognitive Development

You can't reason with babies...
Developmental Milestones: 16-18 Months

**Communication**
- **Expressive**
  - Responds to simple commands
  - Imitates words/signs heard/seen
  - Vocabulary of 10+ meaningful words
  - Uses two word phrases
  - Identifies objects and actions in pictures

- **Receptive**
  - Identifies some body parts
  - Finds familiar objects not in sight
  - Identifies some clothing, toys, food
  - Identifies objects in the immediate physical context on request

**Social/Emotional**
- Prefers to be with familiar people
- Shows caution with strangers
- Imitates other children
- Begins to repeat what was just said
- Uses language to get attention of others

*Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee*
Developmental Milestones: 19-24 Months

**Communication**
- Expressive
  - Attempts “stories” to tell about experiences
  - Occasionally imitates 2 word phrases
  - May ask where and what questions
  - Uses new words regularly
  - Expressive vocabulary of 50+ words
- Receptive
  - Completes two requests with one object
  - Chooses two familiar objects
  - Comprehends action phrases
  - Begins to understand personal pronouns (my, mine, you)

**Social/Emotional**
- Increases self-confidence/is happy to be with people
- Begins to request help when needed
- Initiates pretend play
- Responds to requests from adults
- Practices adult-like conversation about familiar themes
- Uses words to interact
- Requests information
- Takes 1-2 turns in conversation
- Begins to narrate past events, refer to future actions

Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee
Developmental Milestones: 25-30 Months

**Communication**
- **Expressive**
  - Uses 2-3 word phrases more consistently
  - Asks for help using two + words, wash hands
  - Answers wh questions, What’s? Who?
  - Uses negation, don’t like, don’t know, no
  - Repeats 2 numbers counting
- **Receptive**
  - Begins to understand size differences, big/little
  - Begins to understand quantity, one, all
  - Points to objects and gives label
  - Follows 2 step related directions
  - Begins to understand present, future, today, tomorrow

**Social/Emotional**
- Begins to demonstrate parallel play
- Shares toys, cooperates in
- Asks for help using two or more words
- Uses longer utterances
- Tells own age
- Completes actions, Give me five
- Sometimes repeats what was just said
- Answers questions less than half the time

Developed by the KSA 75-5397e Advisory Committee
Language plays a central role in Cognitive Development

Private Speech

Of course I talk to myself. Sometimes I need expert advice.
Developmental Milestones: 31-36 Months

**Communication**
- Expressive
  - Converses in 3-4 word simple sentences
  - Uses questions, yes, no, who, what, where
  - Uses possessive pronouns, his, her
  - Uses simple descriptors hot, cold, big
  - Uses negatives, don’t like, don’t know, not-yet
- Receptive
  - Understands/responds to complex language
  - Carries out 2-3 verbal/signed commands
  - Understands spatial concepts, in, on, under
  - Understands time concepts, today,
  - Understands descriptive words and colors
  - Identifies/matches colors

**Social/Emotional**
- Takes turns and shares
- Engages in make-believe activities
- Expresses feelings mad, happy, sad, scared
- Initiates conversation
- Understands conversational turn taking
- Uses questions for a variety of reasons, to obtain information, to request
- Names a pet or friend and sibling

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Learning Objective #2

Explain the difference between structural language and pragmatics
Structural Language:

- Words and sentences have parts that combine in patterns, exhibiting the grammar of the language.
  - Phonology
  - Syntax & Semantics
### Structure of Language Components

#### Building Blocks Of Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonemes</strong></td>
<td>The smallest units of sound that make up every language</td>
<td><em>p</em> in pansy; <em>ng</em> in sting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morphemes</strong></td>
<td>The smallest units that carry meaning; they are created by combining phonemes</td>
<td>Unthinkable = un<em>think</em>able (prefix = un, root word = <em>think</em>, suffix = <em>able</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>A system of rules (syntax and semantics) used to generate acceptable language that enables us to communicate with and understand others</td>
<td>I enjoy my psychology class. Vs. I my class psychology enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syntax</strong></td>
<td>A system of rules for putting words in order</td>
<td>I am happy. Vs. Happy I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantics</strong></td>
<td>A system of using words to create meaning</td>
<td>I went out on a limb for you. Vs. Humans have several limbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every language is different
Pragmatics:

- **Pragmatic language** refers to the social **language skills** that we use in our daily interactions with others.
  - What we say
  - How we say it
  - Our non-verbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, body **language** etc.)
  - Theory of Mind
  - Conversational turn taking
  - Social problem solving
  - Social thinking
A good example of toddlers using pragmatic skills

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDFxr6dMJUE&t=164s

Video from California School for the Deaf, Fremont
Learning Objective #3

Understand the connection between social skills and language and how to facilitate one when the other is lacking
Development cannot be separated from its Social context

A child's play is not simply a reproduction of what he has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he has acquired.

~Vygotsky
Development depends on interactions with people and things.

Children See, Children Learn.....
Learning can Lead Development

“What a child can do today with assistance, she will be able to do by herself tomorrow.”
- Lev Vygotsky

Zone of Proximal Development

What the child can do
- Draw lines and circles

What the child can’t do
- Draw a house

Connecting the dots
Learning can Lead Development

ZPD in the Lion King

Zone of Proximal Development

- What the child cannot do on their own even with help from a more experienced peer/adult.
- What the child can do on their own.

Teacher’s Role

Level of Maximal Assisted Performance

Level of Independent Performance
Children Construct their Knowledge
Based on their Experiences
Children Construct their Knowledge Based on their Experiences

- Guided learning within the ZPD leads to greater understanding/performance
Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory in Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vygotsky’s sociocultural view</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning is...</td>
<td>social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development is driven by...</td>
<td>input from others and MKO’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Development is different depending on social and cultural context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Children work with others to build knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link (learning/development)</td>
<td>Learning precedes development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of language Speech</td>
<td>Language drives thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social speech becomes inner speech (social processes ⇒ psychological processes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Lev Vygotsky](image.png)
Language, Psychosocial, and Emotional Disorders…and Social-Emotional Development
How language allows navigation

18 months onward

- Language overtakes action as children’s primary means of learning and communication
- Conversation about emotions
- Language use for self-control and the capacity to negotiate verbally
Types of Language Disorders

- Expressive: Getting their meaning or message across to others
- Receptive: Understanding the message coming from others
What causes Language Disorders?

- Genes and heredity – research shows 20-40% of children with a family history of speech & language impairment

- Prenatal nutrition – some research has shown babies are less likely to have severe language issues if mom takes prenatal folic acid supplements

- Other conditions – Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, premature birth

Communication Disorder

An impairment in the ability to receive, send, process, and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal & graphic symbol systems.

- Could involve any/or combination of:
  - Form (phonology, morphology, syntax)
  - Content (semantics)
  - Function (pragmatics)

- Estimated 15-20% of young children have some form of this
Language Delay vs. Language Disorder

- Acquire skills later than peer group
- Less than 50 words by 2 years
- Few word combinations at 30 months
  - Limited use of gestures and sounds to communicate,
  - Limited symbolic play,
  - Limited understanding of word meaning and inability to follow verbal instructions
- Persistent difficulties acquiring and using language skills below age expectations by preschool or school age
- Cannot be explained by other factors
  - Low nonverbal intelligence,
  - Deaf/hh, Blind-VI, Deaf-Blind
  - Autism spectrum disorder
Language Disorders in Young Children

- Can interfere with forming and maintaining friendships

- Experience difficulty entering into peer group conversations and being excluded,
  - Less opportunity to learn and practice the social skills needed for peer interaction
What might we notice?

- Having trouble understanding what people say
  - Following directions
  - Organizing information heard
  - Receptive can be hard to spot in young children

- Limited vocabulary for age
  - Has difficulty learning new words

- Seems frustrated by inability to communicate thoughts

- Is able to pronounce words & sounds, but sentences don’t make sense
  - Or uses limited variety of sentence structures
Psychosocial and Emotional Disorders associated with Language Impairments

- Lack of emotional and behavior regulation
  - Both neurological in nature and those caused by events in a person’s life
- Lack of social cognition
- Conduct and oppositional disorders
- Anxiety and affective disorders
- ADD & ADHD
Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

- Neurological
  - treated by psychiatrists

- Caused by traumatic life events
  - child abuse, death of a family member - should be treated through psychological counseling

- Caused by language disorders

Morales, S. http://www.childspeech.net/u_v.html
Challenges to parents and providers

Children who cannot communicate clearly may make it difficult to understand their needs & respond appropriately

- Model the desired behavior
- Give choices
- Plan ahead
- Know your child’s issues
- Get behavior advice
- Specialized services
- Connect with other parents and families
How to handle the challenges

- Identify the problem
- Identify the child’s triggers, strength, and area for improvement
- Determine intervention strategies
- Apply intervention strategies appropriately
- Help the child create a new pattern
Interventions

- Early identification
- Positive family support
- Consistency of practice
Developing Stronger Social Skills
A child’s self-concept starts to develop at birth

- Begins with how adult caregivers **respond** to the baby
- Warm and caring interactions with a lot of eye contact & touch
Role of Adults

- Influences and reinforces the picture a child is developing of himself
- Child feels safe and loved
- Can count on parents

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxlsKA2QdFY (video self esteem)
What improves social-emotional development?

Responsive Parenting!

- Responding to communication signals
- Emotional – affective support
- Attending to infant’s interests, following his lead
- Joint Attention skills
- Language input to support developmental needs
Empathize, Empathize, Empathize

http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/social-intelligence/toddlers
Stay Close During Playgroups
Don’t Force Toddlers to Share

“It’s Sophia’s turn to use the bucket. Then it will be your turn. I’ll help you wait.”
Let the child decide how long her turn lasts
Help your child wait
Intervene with compulsive grabbing

Summon up all your compassion, put your hand on the disputed toy and say "You want the truck?" Then look at the child using the truck. "Is that okay with you?" If it is, great. You don't have to be the arbiter of fairness.

If not, say "Cole's still using the truck...Cole, will you give the truck to Trevon when you're done? Great, thanks! Trevon, let's find something else to do...Do you want to use the snowplow to make a road for the truck?"

He may well fall apart, especially if he was grabbing to hold himself together. Nurture him through the meltdown. Afterwards, he'll feel so much better, he won't need to grab.
Teach Assertiveness

- If your child often lets other kids take things from him and then seems unhappy, say

- Practice acting this out at home with him, and demonstrate it with teddy bears. Until he develops the language skills, you'll need to be his "voice" when he plays with others.

"You aren't ready to give that up, are you? You can say I'm still playing with this."
Instead of praising sharing in the abstract, help her discover what's great about it

"Look how happy Michael is that he gets a turn with your train."
Before friends come over, toddlers should have a chance to put away their most special toys …if they don’t want anyone else to play with them. Use this ritual as an opportunity to explain that the visiting child will of course expect to play with Junior’s other toys, just as Junior plays with his friends’ toys at their houses.
Social Intelligence for Toddlers

Help them learn to manage their emotions - the foundation of interpersonal relationships

Help them develop empathy for others

Help them learn to express their needs and feelings without attacking

http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/social-intelligence/toddlers
Routines & Rituals
Pictures & Routine Charts

- Promotes better language development & understanding
- Builds sense of trust & understanding
- Helps language to become known and predictable

Amy Szarkowski, 2015
Attending to the Whole Child

- Early language is vital to the social-emotional development of children
- Sometimes, when focusing on the disability we can forget to see how the child is doing overall
- “Teaching language” often prioritizes:
  - Building vocabulary
  - Incremental language development
  - Shared, communicative language, needed for meaning, is not always perceived as top priority

Amy Szarkowski
Building Vocabulary & Communication

- Focus not only on labeling objects, but also on expressing one’s feelings
- Expose children to language that demonstrates the thought processes involved in decision making
- Describe in detail what is to come
- Help children gain an understanding of the events that will occur
Regular and frequent exposure to good, accessible language fosters well-being

Improved parent-child interactions (Kushalnager et al. 2010)

Improved ability to decipher & describe wants & needs (Mayberry, 2002)
Set clear limits on physical aggression

"You can tell us and show us how mad you are without hurting. Come, let's tell Henry how mad you are; I'll help you. You can yell NO and you can stomp your foot as hard as you want. You can yell MOM! and I will always help."
It’s never too early to give children language for their feelings

“It’s so frustrating when you work hard on your tower and it collapses like that. No wonder you’re angry.”

“That big dog’s bark is scary, but you’re safe on this side of the fence and I would never let it hurt you. You don't need to be afraid.”
Remember that underneath anger is usually hurt or fear

"You feel so angry at your brother right now that you feel like you never want to work things out with him. That's what the word hate means. Sometimes when we are very, very angry, we feel that way, even toward people we love. We are a family and we will always work things out. Let's go tell your brother how hurt you are that he pushed you off the swing, and how angry that makes you feel."
Begin introducing the concept of noticing how other people feel as early as you can

"Look at William. He's crying. I think you hurt his feelings."

"That little girl is sure mad. I wonder why?"

"Jana hurt herself. I wonder if we can do anything to help her feel better?"
Stay Calm

Research shows that one of the most important things parents can do to help kids learn to manage their emotions is to stay calm themselves.
Remember they're kids
Questions?
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Thank You!

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